

And thanks to tax cuts, 90 percent of Americans have seen an increase in take-home pay, with a family of four in my district keeping about \$2,000 a year.

Now, some people call that crumbs, people, I think, that are disconnected to working families and middle-income families, people who want to raise your taxes because they think Washington knows best when it comes to spending your money. They want to prop up failed government-controlled, top-down healthcare systems that have failed.

West Texans know better than this, and they know that this is real cash in their pockets that will allow them to invest more in their future and in their family's future.

The bottom line is this: tax reform is paying off in a big way for our families all across this great land; companies are giving bonuses, increasing benefits, and hiring new employees and providing workers with new opportunities, and most importantly, we are seeing optimism, optimism spread throughout this great land.

In fact, tax reform has been so successful, that we want to keep building on it and keep the momentum going. That is why I am proud to support Tax Reform 2.0. I want to thank my friend and fellow Texan, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, KEVIN BRADY, for leading the charge.

The central point of Tax Reform 2.0 is making tax relief for lower and middle income families and small businesses permanent.

In the first round of tax reform, we cut taxes for individual and small business owners, doubled the standard deduction and doubled the child tax credit. However, under current law, these provisions and others are set to expire in 2025.

We don't need to wait until the last minute to prevent Americans' taxes from going up. We can make tax relief permanent now, and that is where Tax Reform 2.0 comes in.

According to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, making this tax relief permanent will grow the GDP by another 2.2 percent, boost wages, and create over a million new jobs; this, on top, again, of the significant gains we have seen and experienced from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Making tax cuts permanent would also allow Americans to plan more confidently for their future, whether that is putting more money away for their kids' colleges or setting more money aside for their retirement or a rainy day fund.

A recent survey found that nearly 80 percent of Americans live paycheck to paycheck and 60 percent of Americans say they couldn't afford a \$500 emergency. Remember, the folks in my district are keeping \$2,000 a year because of the recent tax reform. Sixty percent of Americans say \$500 would put them in a real bind.

Making tax relief permanent is an essential opportunity for us, giving Americans the certainty that they de-

serve in making their financial decisions, and we in Congress can provide that certainty by delivering on Tax Reform 2.0.

Mr. Speaker, currently our economy is growing at a record pace, and we need to keep the policies in place that allow job creators and businessowners of all kinds to keep their foot on the pedal.

Our job creators are always thinking of ways they can be more innovative and competitive, and we in Congress would do well to have that same mentality. We must be proactive and constantly be revisiting our Tax Code and finding ways to improve it, to modernize it so we don't fall behind our foreign competitors.

In order to encourage and reward the risk-taking, the invention, the entrepreneurship that has characterized the great American economy, Tax Reform 2.0 also expands on expensing for start-up companies. By allowing new businesses to write off more of their initial costs, we can spur innovation and more job creation new businesses bring to this country and allow us to maintain our position as the economic envy of the world.

Mr. Speaker, the first round of tax reform reflects the timeless truth that the American people know best how to spend their hard-earned money, better than politicians, better than government bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. By cutting the amount that government takes out of people's paychecks, people have more freedom and they have more resources to invest in their families, in their community, and in our economy.

Tax Reform 2.0 would keep our economy growing and ensure America retains our entrepreneurial edge that has made us a magnet for innovation and the most prosperous, the most powerful, and the most generous country in all the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support Tax Reform 2.0 and I encourage my colleagues to do so.

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS DRINKING WATER SHUTOFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the extremely serious and ongoing issue of safe drinking water in our schools.

This week in my hometown of Detroit, the Detroit Public Schools began the year without safe and clean drinking water. The superintendent chose to shut the water off to the entire school district after 16 of the schools tested positive for elevated levels of lead and copper.

What should have been an exciting first day of school was overshadowed by the fears of lead poisoning and unsanitary learning conditions.

This, unfortunately, is no surprise. We have seen this happen all over the

country, where schools put bags over their drinking fountains because they are not safe for the children to consume the water.

This is a consequence of years of neglecting our Nation's infrastructure. For years, I have spoken out against the severe funding decrease in our infrastructure and our public schools. For too long we have kicked the can down the road and ignored this critical issue of safe drinking water in America.

Deliberately not funding necessary and long overdue upgrades for our water infrastructure hurts women, children, and especially the poor and people of color.

We cannot repeat the Flint water crisis, and we must learn from our mistakes. This situation demands a sense of urgency and should be handled in a timely manner.

As adults, we are responsible for protecting our children. We are the ones who must make the right decisions. This is not a partisan issue, but a public health issue.

The Detroit Public Schools and the Detroit children, every day they work hard to face the challenges to simply obtain an excellent education.

We need to address the immediate health concerns. And we need resources to protect our children from future harm.

Every child must be tested. I appreciate and applaud the superintendent's positive response to this emergency. I urge the school district and the city to use whatever resources are immediately available to test these children for lead poisoning. We need to know how widespread this situation is. The tests will help us understand how much damage our children have been exposed to.

Children covered by Medicare are already required to receive blood lead screening tests. I will work with the city and the State to see how we can get every child in Detroit tested.

Without adequate resources and access to information, we stand to fail our children. This is unacceptable.

We also learned from Flint that professionals, not politicians, should be making health decisions. That is why I introduced H.R. 1909, the Environmental Health Workforce Act.

Only 28 States require the environmental health workforce to be credentialed. And unfortunately, Michigan is not one of those States. This legislation I am proposing will ensure every State has a credentialed workforce.

We would not go to a doctor who did not have an MD. Why would we let someone who is making decisions about our water quality and food do it without proper qualifications.

These emergencies show us that we cannot keep relying on a patchwork of quick fixes. We don't know how many children are in danger until every child is tested. We need to truly invest in long-term solutions.

As I continue monitoring this situation, I will continue pursuing the issue until we have solutions and funding on a Federal level to protect our children.

Water is not a luxury, it is a necessity for life. And the least of ours, our children, should not be put in danger.

RECOGNIZING BRIDLE PATH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a school in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, that has played a critical role in molding the lives of countless young citizens.

Bridle Path Elementary, located in Lansdale, is part of the North Penn School District. The staff at this school understands that the elementary age group encompasses some of the most formative years of a child's life. As such, Bridle Path provides a myriad of opportunities for students to grow, thrive, and explore their interests.

One area in which Bridle Path consistently shines is in the area of music education. Just last year, Bridle Path Elementary School Chorus, under the leadership of band director Michael Klenk, won the 101.1 FM's ninth annual Christmas Choir Competition.

From my experience with this community, I have witnessed their warmth and their dedication to helping each other, and I applaud the work of Principal Heather Mann and her dedicated team of educators and staff, and I wish them continued success.

RECOGNIZING PEBBLE HILL CHURCH

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a house of worship in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, that last month celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Pebble Hill Church in Doylestown was founded in 1968. In its first decade, the church became known for its fierce advocacy for peace and its willingness to show independence from conventional norms.

In 1983, the Reverend Gary Culp joined the congregation, quickly cementing the church's reputation of community service and mutual understanding.

Each year, Pebble Hill Church honors an individual with the Harold and Alma Able Peace Award. This year's winner was Janet Berkowitz for her work with the organization Suicide Anonymous. September, Mr. Speaker, is Suicide Prevention Month, and I commend Pebble Hill for recognizing Janet and for her work in shining a light on the plight of mental illness.

I applaud the entire Pebble Hill Church family for their sustained commitment to making our world brighter and more peaceful. I wish the current celebration coordinator, the Reverend Larry Hall, and all dedicated members

of the staff, volunteers, and worshippers continued success for years to come.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF RICHARD STRICKER

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of a community icon in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Richard Stricker, who passed away in late 2015, spent decades dedicated to public service. A former council member who served on the Lansdale Cemetery Board of Directors for over 50 years, Richard was a fixture in Lansdale.

He was fittingly recognized on this year's Founders Day, receiving the Lansdale Borough's Lifetime Achievement Award. Throughout his storied career as a small businessman and a contractor and a politician, and as a driving force in the revitalization of the Lansdale Cemetery, Richard always treated all of his fellow citizens with kindness and with respect.

Said Lansdale Historic Society officer Dick Shearer, you would be "hard-pressed to find someone who gave as much to Lansdale as he did."

I am proud to honor Richard Stricker for a lifetime of service, and would like to thank the Lansdale Borough Council and Councilwoman Mary Fuller and all of the ceremony attendees for their work in honoring the life of this fine citizen.

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SHAWKAN AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out in support of international press freedom and to highlight, in particular, two egregious cases of government assaults on the rights of journalists.

This Saturday, a court in Egypt will decide whether to execute an award-winning photojournalist for doing his job. While in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, the Nobel Prize-winning former political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi, has overseen the imprisonment and sentencing of two Reuters reporters who were attempting to shed light on the atrocities committed by the Burmese military against the Rohingya minority.

In Egypt, Mahmoud Abou Zeid, who is known professionally as Shawkan, was taken into custody along with two other journalists while photographing the violent dispersal of a protest in Rabaa Square on August 14, 2013. The other journalists were foreign nationals and were released within hours, while Shawkan, an Egyptian, has been abused and beaten, denied his freedom, due process, and adequate medical treatment ever since—simply for doing his job.

In 2016, the U.N. Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Deten-

tion issued a report on his case, calling his detention "arbitrary" and recommending that he be released immediately.

Shawkan received the 2018 UNESCO Freedom Prize and has been recognized by press freedom organizations worldwide for his outstanding contributions to the profession in the face of danger.

In July, I sent a letter to President Sisi of Egypt urging him to support the immediate release of Shawkan or, at the very least, to support an individual trial instead of the mass trial that serves as a basis of his detention so that evidence specific to his case can be heard and considered. The Egyptian Government has not responded to this letter, and they are planning to sentence Shawkan as early as this week-end.

Unfortunately, Egypt is not alone in its harassment and imprisonment of members of the press. Just this week a Burmese court sentenced Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, reporters working for Reuters, to 7 years in prison following their arrest while reporting on the mass killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim men in the village of Inn Din, Rakhine State, last September.

This decision is a significant step backward in Burma's transition to democracy and reflects poorly on the Aung San Suu Kyi government's commitment to those same democratic ideals for which he was punished not so long ago.

The freedom to express oneself is a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The freedom of the press and the public's right to information are paramount to the success of a democracy. The censorship and degradation of the press is among the most effective tools for oppression and control.

Thomas Jefferson captured this sentiment when he said, and I paraphrase, if forced to choose, he would prefer newspapers without a government rather than a government without newspapers.

Today, authoritarian rule has targeted members of the press in order to stifle dissent and maintain power. According to Freedom House, only 13 percent of the world's population enjoys a free press. Global press freedom has declined to its lowest point since 2013 amid unprecedented threats to journalists in major democracies and attempts by authoritarian states to control the media, even beyond their borders.

We are witnessing a new era in press suppression as even politicians in democracies attempt to shape news coverage by undermining traditional media outlets, exerting influence over public broadcasters, and favoring friendly private outlets.

Unfortunately, the current President of the United States has led the charge against the press with nearly daily tirades against the media, branding them as the enemy of the state and rejecting the news media's role in holding public servants accountable. Just